

CANADIAN IMMIGRANTS.

From time to time a cry is raised that some great scheme should be devised for the transplantation of English labourers *en masse*—more especially the unskilled labourers of our large cities—to the Dominion of Canada with its hundreds and thousands of acres of fertile farming land, its railways pushing long fingers further, and further into the great North West, and its thousand and one opportunities for strong-armed industrious folk to make way for themselves and a living for their families such as they have never known in the old country. On the other hand Canada replies in most emphatic language, "Do no such thing. Send farmers, with capital; send girls fit for service, as many as you please; send farm labourers, especially steady single men; send mechanics as long as they are good ones, but keep your unskilled town labour to yourselves. Our own cities are full of labourers. We have no room for more."

Where lies the truth? Shall we in England, groaning with our chronic overplus of unskilled labour, rest satisfied with the Canadian reply, and cease to aid or promote emigration of anyone to Canada except the capitalist, the farm labourer, or the servant girl?

Certainly, Canada ought to know what is good for her, and nothing but harm can be done by thrusting emigrants upon an inhospitable shore. At the same time there are always two sides to a question, and, sometimes, more than one motive for the expression of an opinion. The present writer, having lately returned from a careful examination of the condition of English emigrants in the mills and factories of Montreal, as well as on the farms of Ontario and Manitoba, ventures to offer a few remarks upon the matter drawn from personal experience.

We may dispose at once, and for ever, if that were possible, of the notion that under any conceivable circumstances "Colonization" of English unskilled labour would be wise or right. It has been tried on a small scale, and has miserably failed. It is bad for Canada, very bad for the people who promote and organize the scheme, worst of all for the colonists themselves. Unless there

arose in Canada a universal cry for labouring men, as there is at the present time for servants, no emigration "in the lump" would be justifiable; it would only result in the Dominion Government being requested by its subjects to enforce such regulations as are now in vogue in the United States. But emigration to Canada, and of unskilled labour too, is always going on. Quietly and unobtrusively, without aid from Government in any shape or form, except the invaluable information given to all enquiries by H.M. High Commissioner for Canada in Victoria Street, Westminster, working men, without capital and without skill, find their way out there. I have seen them in their homes in Point St. Charles and Hochelage, Montreal; in the farming districts called the Eastern Townships; in the Province of Quebec; in the towns and country districts of Ontario; in Winnipeg; and on the prairies of Manitoba. These emigrants hailed from many parts of England, but the large majority were from the East End of London, and not more than three in every hundred possessed mechanical skill of any kind. Yet they were better off, every one of them, than they had been in England. A few, a very few, unsatisfactory folk there were who from an unforeseen break down in health, or tendency to drink and laziness, were not happy in their new lives—the actual number was six out of the hundred,—but even they were not in want of food, and should their health and morals improve they will speedily join the ranks of those who are doing well.

The case of one man struck me very much. He lived in Montreal, and was labouring on some public works. A very average specimen of an emigrant was H, a painter's labourer in England. He was a little man with weak health at times, whose physique, indeed, hardly came up to the standard experience teaches us should prevail among emigrants; but a cheery fellow, full of ideas, and game to the backbone. I saw him in his own kitchen, and his remarks were delivered over a clay-pipe, which caused a little confusion sometimes, by going out when he became excited, having to be relighted there and then. For the rest he was perfectly at his ease; what he said he meant.

How had things gone with him? Rather roughly at first. Whether the work had been too much for him, or the heat of the summer—it was his first in Canada—I do not remember, but both he and his wife had been laid up, and the struggle in their strange surroundings had been a heavy one.

"But Lor' bless you, we pulled through," he said, with a laugh. "I aint like some who come out here expectin' to lay on swan's-down, and drink iced champagne. It weren't the fault of the country that I were misfortunate. What they want here is a man

who can work ; I could not, so they did not want me. Now ! oh, I'm landing in £1 12s. 6d. a week, regg'ler money, and I've struck a regg'ler job ; and I feels better in my health than I've done this long while ; and the debts is being paid off, and we'll have something put by for winter—see if we don't. Yes, sir, I like this country ; there's more chance, somehow, for a labouring chap. If you drop out one day, you drop in again the next, on a way of speaking. There aint no anxiety about it, as we used to have at home. We have six rooms, and lets off three, and stands at 5s. 3d. a week, and there's the wife and kids to keep. Food is about the same as at home, and will come cheaper when we get flour by the sack instead of by the pound—for the missis bakes her own bread now. Meat is dirt cheap, and good too. Best steak only 6d. a pound, and ribs for boiling at half that price. Ah, I know ; there's the winter, and I aint been through one yet, and you think I'd better not talk. Well, I won't. But I will say this. I hear on all sides of me that a man who saves a bit and gets forehanded with stores of fuel and grub, can just snap his fingers at the winter—anyway, I'm not afraid, for I've a regg'ler job. But, sir, don't forget this, and when you see working chaps at home, tell 'em straight, men who come out here have to *rustle*, and no mistake. Hours is longer, and work is much harder ; and they work quick like. It nearly knocked me out at first. Now they may work quick as they please, and I will stand to it as well as any. But so many folks come out without knowing this, and either they won't, or they can't, fall in to Canadian ways, and then they goes home and cusses the country ; and that's too bad. For it's a good country for working people, who *can* work, I know it is, and I'll be glad all my life I came out here."

Such were the sentiments of little H. It is easy to understand that £1 12s. 6d. a week—"regg'ler"—was a new life to him.

To form a definite opinion of the condition of working men in Montreal as a whole, it was necessary to see and examine men who had been out one, two, three, and four years. The same story was told everywhere. The country was good for the industrious man, and bad for the "shirk" or the drinker. The winter is cold, and long and hard, and a great deal of work is stopped in consequence ; but, on the other hand, there is a great deal more work going on in the winter than strangers imagine. The fact is, it is very rough hard labour, clearing streets and tramways of snow, &c., and digging sewers, and the exposure to the cold is trying ; and large numbers of men refuse to do it, and prefer to say they are starving, and receive relief from charitable people. If they are thrifty, and their wives careful managers, enough may be saved in summer to enable them to do very little in the winter months. Living, all round, is de-

cidedly cheaper in Montreal than in London, when the emigrant's wife has learnt the ways of the country.

A word should be said about this. An emigrant of five years' experience of Canada, a shrewd, hard-headed person, said to me once: "If you wants to know how to get on here, do this—work hard, drink little, and *leave your London ways behind you.*"

How much lies in these last words it is hard for anyone who has not been an emigrant or mixed intimately with emigrants to realise.

A London working man with a family who emigrates to Canada tears his old life up by the roots; and, just as he has to buy new chairs and tables, and furnish up his house on the other side with things which may be good or better than the old, but are inevitably new and strange, so he has to conform to new habits of living, learn new ways of working, call things by new names, pay his way with strange coins, and in Montreal often work cheek by jowl with French-Canadians who can scarcely speak his language.

Now this is always hard. Hard for the men; harder still for their wives, who must set to and learn to accommodate themselves to the ways of the new country, and wrestle hourly all day with a desperate longing for old associations, which, however squalid or rough they may have been in reality, will seem far more comfortable than this new land. The man has his regular work to take the edge off this home-sickness; the wife has to make her work, which is a very different thing. Hence, it is most essential that working men who emigrate should have wives with strong health and courage, and that both man and wife should seek to fall into the ways of the country, as the only cure for this home-sickness, which otherwise will make their lives miserable, whatever may be their wages. If this is done, in a very short space of time the wives become as contented as their husbands. Canadian cities are certainly good places for women. Four shillings and twopence per day and three good meals are paid for charring and cleaning; while the girls of the family, as they grow up, can procure comfortable places in service at a rate of wages that would make our young maids stare.

So much for life in the cities of Canada. Passing to farms and farm labour in the eastern provinces, we reach a different class of men and a different life. All English emigrants who find their way to farms at once, and pass the city by, should have had at some time in their lives farming experience or training. There is a beautiful theory abroad in the minds of ladies and gentlemen unacquainted with the work required of a farm labourer that it is quite reasonable and right to expect our city workers who have

hardly seen a green field, and don't know a plough from a harrow, to plunge into country life and labour when they reach Canada, and be thankful for the chance to do it. This has been done with disastrous results. Firstly, the farmer, if he takes a man who knows nothing, pays him the smallest possible wage that he can force him to accept, and is careful not to engage him for more than the busiest month in the year, when even the labour of a London crossing-sweeper would be better than nothing; secondly, the unaccustomed strain of working hard in the fields for fifteen hours a day more or less—more rather than less—is in most cases too much for the man, and, if it does not break down his health, fills him with the deepest disgust for the land. Thirdly, in consequence of the small wage, and the wife not understanding country ways of living, the family too often find themselves as winter approaches without savings, without work, without a home, and obliged in most cases to find their way into the nearest town, and pull through their first winter the best way they can. And though, even here, no man with courage and health has any cause to despair—nor does despair—to suggest to him after this experience that farming life is a desirable form of existence will result in an expression of opinion on his part about farming and farmers which must do harm to agriculture, and deter many others from going on the land who are really wanted there. The case of the English farm labourer is, of course, quite different. Yet here, again, a very serious drawback with which he will have to contend when hiring-out on the land in the Province of Quebec, and in a modified degree in Ontario, is a tendency which prevails among so many of the farmers to overreach newcomers. I have heard of this complaint from those whose business it is to place emigrants upon their arrival, and from so many of the emigrants themselves that to find a family who had not been “bested” in their first place of work in the land was quite an exception. I hope that Canadians who read this will not imagine that I mean to include all Canadian farmers under this category, or that even the majority are to be put down as “sharks.” There are very many farmers, some of whom I have the pleasure of knowing personally, whose kind and considerate treatment of old-country folk is well known. The fact remains, however, that one of the chief difficulties those who wish to promote emigration of good farm labour have to contend with is the beating-down propensity of numbers of farmers who, on the other hand, profess the greatest desire to encourage men to settle upon the land.

In one case a farmer in the Province of Quebec, not a poor man, informed an emigrant who was an experienced gardener, thoroughly acquainted with stock, that eight dollars (£1 12s.) a month with free house, and firewood and milk, was all he could pay him for his

first year, and for his second year only twelve dollars monthly (£2 8s).

The emigrant, knowing nothing of the country, agreed to this, and tried his best, with a frugal and industrious wife, for the first month, then he struck and tried elsewhere, and after some difficulty found not far away a steady situation at eighteen dollars (£3 12s.) a month, and the same privileges. It is worth recording that this man is as happy as possible now. He has saved enough to buy a cow, a stock of firewood, hay and grain for winter, three pigs, and several chickens. He has grown potatoes and vegetables for home consumption, and he will get work all the winter from his present master at a slightly lower rate of wage. This is the result of his first six months in the new country.

After all, hard as farm labour undoubtedly is; essential as indomitable energy and courage are to both the farm labourer and his wife, and a dogged endurance of a dull life and all sorts of privations during the early years, the best examples of truly successful emigrants are to be found among the farming men. There was a man, also in the Province of Quebec, whom we will call Thomas Jones. He arrived in Canada with a wife and two young children. In England he had been a journeyman butcher and farm labourer. He also knew the value of keeping accounts, and practised it, a somewhat rare accomplishment for one of his class. And in his heart he nourished a firm determination to make his way to an independence that he could not compass at home. A thin, small man was Jones, and when I met him in September he was dressed in the shabbiest clothes and the oldest I ever saw any human being wear who was not a professed mendicant in the rags which are his stock-in-trade. He did not look more than half-nourished either, but he was healthy, with a tough wiry frame, and a face every line of which was as firm as if he commanded a man-of-war.

Jones came out in 1889 with £8. In 1893 he had sixty-four and a half acres of farming land of his own, a house which he has mostly built himself, a good barn and stable, two horses, two cows, two pigs, thirteen chickens, and two waggons. The total cost of the things—for this land of Jones's is no free government grant—has been 1,166 dollars 37 cents (£233 5s. 6d.), all of which he has paid in hard cash. The only debt he has is 400 dollars (£80), the balance of purchase-money, 1,175 dollars (£235), which in 1890 he agreed to pay in six years.

Thus he has saved £233 5s. 6d. in four years and six months: and on wages which, for the first year, were £3 12s. 11d. a month; second year, £3 15s. a month; third year, £4 a month; and since then 4s. 7d. a day, or £1 7s. 6d. a week. He has also from time to time made small sums by slaughtering, and since he has had his farm

he has let off a little pasture land. But allowing for much ingenuity on his part at finding various ways of turning an honest penny, and for the perseverance shown by the fact that he has not missed a day's work since he landed, and has, therefore, done all his private work in spare hours, with all this it still remains an extraordinary evidence of thrift that upon such small takings a man can save £233 in less than five years, and keep a wife and family, which has increased from two to five, the eldest even now being only nine years old.

Let us tell the whole truth. Jones has denied himself everything but the bare necessities of life. His wife is as thin as he, and his children the funniest little scarecrows in the way of clothes ever seen. He told me that at the present time the living of the family, after free butter, milk, potatoes and vegetables are thrown in, comes to exactly 4s. 2d. (one dollar) a week. On the other hand, there has been no illness among them from underfeeding, and through strong representations made by Jones himself, a school has been established within walking distance to which the elder children go regularly. In another year Jones confidently expects to clear off his £80 debt. Next spring he will be working partly on his own land, and the year after he will be entirely independent of others, and will not live, he says, on a dollar a week.

This result has been brought about by nothing but perseverance and thrift. He has had no windfalls and no influential friends. His employers have been just men who paid him regularly, but not a penny more than they could help, nor has his success been owing to any genius on his own part. He is not a genius, but simply a determined, hard-headed, industrious man.

Such men can get on in England it will be said. That is quite true, but, at present, the conditions of farm labour at home are not favourable to such success as this.

There are Jones' to be found in many parts of Canada, both in town and country, and wherever you find them they are doing uncommonly well. Indeed, my experience would lead me to believe that were I to be asked to judge of the fitness of a body of men to emigrate—I should be less inclined to inquire what kind of work they could do, important as that is, than to find out whether they possessed the faith and temper, more or less, of my thrifty friend.

In the Ontario towns: in London, Hamilton, and even Toronto—though that city has been overbuilt, and at the present time is not to be recommended to emigrants of any description,—one found friends who had had a very hand-to-mouth existence in England living comfortably and well. In the towns a well and tastefully furnished home is what strikes a visitor as the most characteristic

feature of a working man's life in Ontario, and next to this the excellent quality and unrestricted quantity of food. For (I speak without any sinister intention to disparage Ontario hotels) the best cooked, and most truly appetising meals I had while in that province were taken in the houses of the working men, hospitable for the sake of old acquaintance with my travelling companion, Captain G. Lem-Gretton, Secretary of the East End Emigration Fund. To the personal influence and introduction of this gentleman I am chiefly indebted for the glimpse I have been able to get of working men in Canada.

In one Ontario town there was quite a colony of English working men, who had been out for periods varying from six months to three years. Nearly all had been unskilled general labourers of one sort or another in England. Here they were working in brickyards in summer, and coalyards in winter, earning on an average all the year round six shillings a-day. The work, they said, was very severe, and to one or two had at first proved almost more than they could bear, but when used to it the weariness left them, and with good nourishment and an open-air life their health was splendid. Living is cheap there, and many had plots of land of half an acre and upwards, and drew good crops of potatoes and other vegetables from them, while some were investing in pigs and calves, and others talking of purchasing their houses and lots and becoming freeholders. The healthiness of the children, and their sturdiness, was a sight to see. And last, but not least, the compulsory education of the women in thrift and housewifely accomplishments was a very satisfactory indication of the training their girls would receive in the future. It was also noteworthy to see how the boys of the family, as they grew old enough to do some work, were put on to a farm in their holidays, and, judging by results, are likely to become good thrifty farmers by-and-bye.

Travelling still further west we came to Winnipeg, that strange little city of anomalies. Winnipeg has telephones and electric tramways and pretty villas and fine public buildings, intermixed with hopeless seas of mud in rainy times, working men's dwellings where household accommodation and conveniences are in some cases as rough as they were in the days of the first pioneer; dirty little shanties of wood lining parts of the principal thoroughfares, and a general appearance of rapid growth and extraordinary unevenness in every department of life.

Yet, in the habits of these Manitoba folk there is a refreshing independence of conventionality—a sturdy self-reliance and power of adaptability to untoward circumstances one could not find in the East. If Ontario and Quebec are not to be recommended to the Englishman who likes to carefully measure the number of working

hours in a day, who has never saved, and never intends to, and has no insuperable objection to pawning his Sunday clothes now and then, Manitoba would be ten times worse. How men work in the North West! How light-heartedly the boys of the family tramp off to the bush when the winter comes to swing an axe through snow and frost, camping out in tent or rude hut with the thermometer at thirty degrees below zero! Winter in Winnipeg itself is a bad time unless there are plenty of stores of food and fuel laid by. Almost all work not on the Canadian Pacific Railway or Corporation-sewer closes down in winter. A man must push and strive and save in summer-time if he intends to winter in Winnipeg. No London general labourer with a young family, or, indeed, any kind of labourer with such incumbrance, is advised to go to Manitoba unless he has capital. Farmers in Manitoba and the North West have no accommodation for family men. Single men who board with the farmer's family are what he wants, or girls who will make respectable servants. How Winnipeg ladies groan for good servants! A limited number of really first-class mechanics wanted, likewise blacksmiths, good journeyman tailors, and a few navvies if they are very strong men.

But, when all is said, the real demand in Manitoba is for single men, servants, and farmers with capital. This brings us to the question of taking up free grants of Government land. One golden rule should be observed in all parts of Canada—more especially in Manitoba and the North West generally, where life is harder and ruder than in the East, and the winter lasts longer. No man, no matter what may be the extent of his experience and knowledge of farming, should take up land unless he has at least £100 sterling in hand to start with after arriving at his destination. Of course, for any man to take up free land, or buy "improved" land, without the most careful personal examination of the country, its soil, its climate, and the manner of living adopted by its inhabitants, would be the greatest folly. But for a man to settle with a family on new land however good, without a sufficient amount of ready money behind him to provide for unforeseen contingencies and to purchase stock and machinery is suicidal. It means debt, bankruptcy, ruin. I know one man who did this. I saw him a month ago in one of the towns of Manitoba in regular work and earning a sufficient livelihood for his family. But he is a bitter, miserable, discontented man. Four years ago he came out with very good prospects, and found a capital situation. He would not keep it. In spite of a solemn promise, made before he left England, he "went on the land" before he had been a year in the country. Against the advice of friends he borrowed money to do this, and so started with a mill-stone round his neck. He worked immensely

hard, and had some small success at first; but the debt was behind everything, and when two bad seasons came in succession he was unable to keep going, and had to give up the land and move into town. It may not have been all his fault. He brings accusations against certain individuals for taking advantage of his inexperience, accusations which may possess foundation in fact. But the main cause of his failure which has soured his life and has worn his poor wife nearly into her grave with overwork and under feeding—was trying to become a farmer in Manitoba on borrowed capital.

There is one form of emigration about which exists much controversy—the emigration of children under fourteen years of age. Many authorities on the subject have told me that it ought to be stopped altogether, and that even where training and receiving homes are established on both sides of the water, and every care taken to choose children physically and morally fit for the life, more harm is done than good. On the other hand the promoters of this work produce long lists of successful cases, and declare that the percentage of failure is infinitesimally small. It has not been possible for me to form an opinion on the subject, further than this: where societies or individuals—and both exist—send out children of tender age without careful selection beforehand, and without taking the utmost pains to place such children in homes where they will be well and kindly treated, they should receive short shrift from the authorities, and their work be crushed out of existence. I am pleased to find that the Government are quite alive to this danger, and have lately been taking active steps to prevent the emigration of unsuitable children. Their action has not come too soon, as emigration agents in various parts of the Dominion, and more than one Boys' Home in Montreal could testify.

With reference to adult emigration; as a last word I would again earnestly beg everyone interested in this subject, especially all clergymen, to remember how much depends upon the fitness of the would-be emigrant for Canadian life. Canada will not have and should not have the "submerged tenth," or anything approaching it. Too many unsuitable people emigrate as it is. Emigration agents groan over the number of weakly, undersized, feckless folk who have drifted into Canada under the impression that because it is a good country bad workmen and poor citizens can thrive there. Never was a greater mistake made. The same thing may be said to people of the middle class who pay the passage out of young relatives of weak principles and loose lives under the fond delusion that they will be "out of temptation in Canada." No such thing. On the contrary they will live worse lives there than at home, for there will be no restraining influence of caste or family pride. In

Canada no one knows them, and they fall lower than ever before.

Let us do our best to keep our rubbish to ourselves. Canada has a dust-bin of her own to keep clean. But if we treat her fairly, and send her those who may have fallen short in the race here through ill-luck, but are no disgrace to any land, then will she repay our care with interest, and both countries be the better, the healthier, and the greater, for emigration.

ARTHUR PATERSON.
